

# Destination:

# Northwest Missouri

Each issue, the *Pathways* staff chooses a notable locale – a place worth visiting – and explores the paths that lead to it, spotlighting attractions, points of interest, oddities and other items of note along the way.

After all, getting there is half the adventure.

The northwest corner of Missouri may qualify as the best kept tourism secret in the entire state. Whether your interest is geology, Native American culture, fur trading, the western migration, the Pony Express, the Civil War, outlaws of the old west or fine art and unusual architecture, you'll find it all here.

Coming into northwest Missouri from the east on Route 36 is a journey through time. Originally called the "Old State Road," the route was used by pioneers before the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad was completed in 1859 (the original train is now displayed at the Patee House Museum in St. Joseph). For a while, it was called the "White Cross Trail," the "Rock Island Highway" and, later on, the "Appian Way of American."

On Nov. 27, 2001, the Missouri Department of Transportation officially opened the final stretch of four lane Route 36 in Northwest Missouri with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Hamilton. To commemorate the event, the "inheritors" of the new highway (the kindergarten class of Hamilton Elementary School) were invited to help cut the official ribbon. The first vehicle to drive the route was the 1947 Cadillac originally owned by J.C. Penney who was born in Hamilton.

Around 1914, people began calling it "The Pikes Peak Ocean-to-Ocean Highway" because it connected the Atlantic Ocean in New York to the Pacific Ocean at San Francisco. When the Federal Highway numbering system was implemented in 1926, the highway name was permanently changed to Route 36. Historians have compared Route 36 to the original two-lane Route 66, but the completion of four lanes in the last few years has made Route 36 a much safer and more scenic highway.

*Route 36: From the Rise of J.C. Penney  
to the Fall of Jesse James*

By Elaine Justus

## J.C. Penney's Birthplace

One of the first towns you encounter as you enter northwest Missouri is Hamilton, founded in 1859. Hamilton has the distinction of being the hometown of merchant magnate James Cash (J.C.) Penney. He was born outside Hamilton in 1875 and his boyhood home, complete with period furnishings and family photos, is open to the public.

Downtown Hamilton also boasts the J.C. Penney Museum and Library, which is filled with memorabilia of Penney's retail career and his many agricultural endeavors. The J.C. Penney Hometown Festival is held the second weekend in June every year. A flea market, carnival and live music are just a few of the many attractions.

## The Mormon Migration

Traveling west on Route 36 in Caldwell County between Hamilton and Cameron, you will encounter Route D going south towards Mirabile, and the Far West Mormon settlement. Settled in 1836 as a refuge for the Latter-day Saints fleeing persecution in Clay County, it became the county seat, with an estimated 3,000-5,000 inhabitants. It has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1970 because of its importance to the Mormon faith.

## J.C. Penney Museum and Library





Library area of the Albrecht-Kemper Museum



A hand-carved, dugout canoe at the St. Joseph Museum

It was at Far West that a temple site was dedicated and the cornerstones laid, seven spiritual revelations of the Mormon faith were received, and Joseph F. Smith, sixth president of the Church, was born. Also within a short driving distance, you will find two other important Mormon sites:

- Adam-ondi-Ahman (north of Hamilton on Route 13 in Daviess County): Although the Mormons believe that the Garden of Eden was located in Jackson County, they also believe this location is where Adam and Eve came when they were expelled from the Garden. The original town boasted over 400 inhabitants in 1838.
- Haun's Mill (south of Hamilton on Route 13 and east on Route U in Caldwell County): In October 1838, 250 Missouri militia, following the "Extermination Order" of then Gov. Lilburn W. Boggs, attacked the mill killing 17 Mormons and wounding 13 more. Survivors were warned to leave Missouri immediately or suffer the same consequences.

## Geology

"Loess" soil is found only three places in the world – the Yangtze River in China, central Germany and northwest Missouri. When the glaciers of the Ice Age melted back, they ground the soil to a fine powder that ultimately was blown by the winds into cliff formations along major river deltas. When MoDOT builds roads through loess, they can cut vertically through the cliffs because

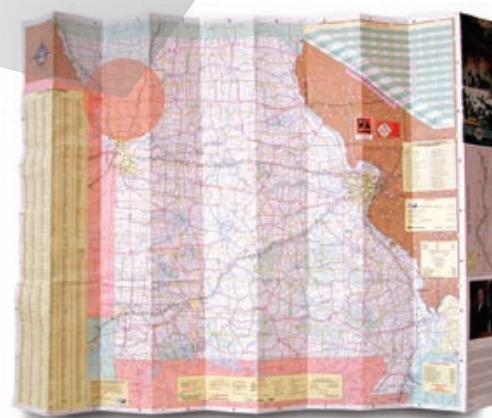


loess doesn't erode like normal soil. Some birds, such as the migratory bank swallow, build their nests into the cliffs and reuse them year after year.

## Plains Indians and the Platte Purchase

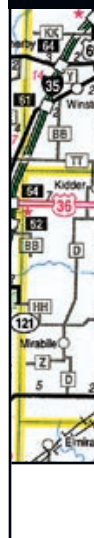
Did you know the original western boundary of this portion of Missouri was intended to be a straight north and south line? When the state was admitted to the union on Aug. 20, 1821, the plan was to extend the north/south line straight up from Arkansas to the Iowa line. From about Kansas City north, the remainder of the land between that line west to the Missouri River was promised to the Native American tribes of the Sac, Fox, Omaha, Iowa, Oto and others in perpetuity.

Why? Because the high bluffs along the river were considered holy land by the Plains Indians. The rays of the setting sun were so strong, the Indians brought their dead and their dying to the bluffs believing that their souls could walk to heaven on them. They called the area "Sunbridge."



But perpetuity came to an end when settlers saw the advantage of a good river access. William Clark was the Indian agent who negotiated with the tribes to have them abandon the area for reservations in Kansas. This event was called the "Platte Purchase," and white settlers began streaming in almost immediately. The St. Joseph Museum, located at 1100 Charles, contains one of the largest collections of Plains Indian artifacts in the world.

A French fur trader named Joseph Robidoux was one of the first settlers. He established







**Residential example of the elegant 19th century architecture in St. Joseph**



**Many of St. Joseph's older homes were influenced by European buildings.**



**Buchanan County Courthouse, St. Joseph**

a federally approved trading post in the area under the auspices of the American Fur Company (owned by John Jacob Astor) while the area was still under the control of the Plains Indians. He stayed after they left to operate his trading post for both the mountain men and the new settlers, and ultimately developed plans for a town named after his patron saint: St. Joseph.

The apartment building he constructed to house settlers while their homes were being built has been fully restored as the Robidoux Row Museum and now helps people to learn more about life in the frontier before the Civil War. The museum is located at Third and Poulin streets in St. Joseph.

### The Western Migration

It has been estimated that between 1843 and 1869, more than half a million people put their families and their belongings in covered wagons and set out for points west. In the early days, it was to find land and settle down, but later on, it became the rush to find gold. Whatever their reason for going, over half of those good people started their journeys in St. Joseph (at the time, St. Joseph was larger than Kansas City and Independence combined). Innumerable fortunes were made outfitting the wagons going west, and much of the story of north-west Missouri has been shaped by those family fortunes.

The wealth of these families was most evident in the architecture of the homes

they built for themselves. Many of them had traveled extensively in Europe, and competed against each other to see who could construct the most extravagant French Chateau. Turrets, balconies, beer gardens, tons of bas-relief decorations and a fortune in stained glass still remain as a reminder of that glorious time.

### The Pony Express

By 1860, people began to demand better mail communication. Mail delivery from New York to San Francisco took 30 days by ship and 23 days by stagecoach, and that wasn't good enough. The thought began to emerge that horseback express mail just could be the answer. In 1860, the firm of Russell, Majors and Waddell set up a chain of stations 15 miles apart along the area reaching from St. Joseph to Sacramento (a distance of approximately 2000 miles).

The Pony Express promised delivery from St. Joseph to California in 10 days, and the fee was only \$5 for each ½ ounce. The main office for the Express was the Patee House located at 12<sup>th</sup> and Penn streets (considered the finest hotel in the state, and now home to the Patee House Museum). Although the Pony Express delivered as promised, it consistently lost money, and after 18 months had to declare defeat. In that time, though, they made 108 runs each way. The total distance covered equaled 24 times around the earth, and only one pouch of mail was



**Pony Express Stables, St. Joseph**



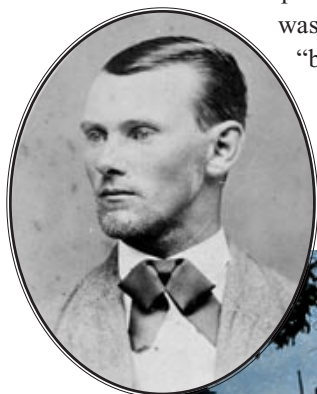


ever lost. The Pony Express Stables, located at 914 Penn St., is fully restored and has a lot of information and original equipment on display for the public.

## The Civil War

For the most part, the USA was distinctly divided in the years leading up to 1860. You and your community were either pro-Union or pro-Confederacy. Missouri was the

exception and nowhere was the phrase “brother fighting against brother” more true than in northwest Missouri.



Although the northernmost battle of the Civil War took place at Bee Creek in Platte County, guerilla fighters for both sides took turns raiding farmsteads, murdering families and generally reducing the entire region to scorched-earth poverty. The chaos that reigned in northwest Missouri was unique, and remains largely unexplored historically. By the end of the Civil War, thievery and pillaging had become a way of life for guerilla fighters like Quantrell, Cole



A stretch of the unique parkway system in St. Joseph

Younger and the James brothers. Most of them met with violent deaths, and such was the case for Jesse James, who had settled with his wife and two children in St. Joseph. Only 34 years old, James was shot and killed in his family home on April 3, 1882, by Bob Ford, a member of his own gang.

The home in which he was shot and killed now stands at the location of the Patee House and is open to the public. Today, the James Home is a museum dealing with the life and death of this notorious criminal. In 1995, forensic scientists exhumed the outlaw’s body and artifacts from the grave, including the coffin handles, a small tie pin and a casting of his skull showing the bullet hole behind his right ear are now a permanent part of the museum’s display.

## The Parkway

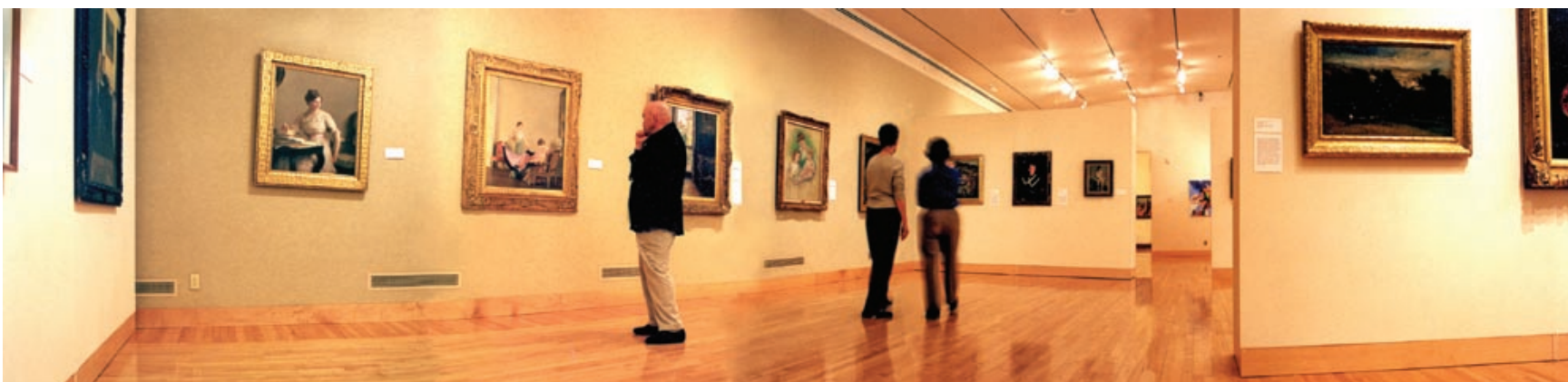
St. Joseph was known as one of the most innovative cities in America in the early 1900s, and nowhere is that more evident than in the city’s unique parkway systems. Designed and developed in 1918 by internationally known landscape architect George Burnap, the parkway is a ribbon of green space that winds through the city for 26 miles, connecting three separate parks. Placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1995, the system is a popular walking, jogging, biking and touring attraction. In addition, it is said to be one of only three parkways built in that era in the United States to be still intact.

## Fine Art

If culture is what you seek, St. Joseph boasts one of the finest collections of 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Art in the Midwest at the Albrecht-Kemper Museum of Art located at 2818 Frederick Blvd.



## Albrecht-Kemper Museum







**Display from Glore Psychiatric Museum**



**WWI Uniforms at the National Military Heritage Museum**



**An early television at the Patee House Museum**

Works by Thomas Hart Benton, Mary Cassatt and Wayne Thiebaud are only one small portion of the Museum's permanent collection. The building that houses the museum is fascinating, too. It was originally built as the private home of Mr. and Mrs. William Albrecht, founders of the Western Tablet Company (they made the Big Chief tablets that were so popular with grade school children). Portions of the home are still preserved, and the downstairs library area, complete with original Mission furniture and a huge fireplace, is especially appealing.

### The Glore Psychiatric

In November 1874, St. Joseph became home to the state's second lunatic asylum dedicated "to the noble work of reviving hope in the human heart, and dispelling the portentous clouds that penetrate the intellects of minds diseased." The Glore Psychiatric Museum was developed to preserve artifacts used in the treatment of mental illness. Its collection is arguably the largest and best single exhibition explaining the evolution of mental health care in the United States. Examples of blistering, restraining, bleeding, dousing, stomping and spinning are displayed alongside fever cabinets, hydrotherapy, phrenology, convulsive therapy and psychosurgery. Located at 3406 Frederick Ave., the museum is open almost every day and admission is free. Television

producers from all over the world have sought out the museum to film programs on location. One of the exhibits they always feature is the collection of items taken from a patient's stomach! Bizarre, but true. The Glore is becoming one of the most popular attractions in northwest Missouri.

### The Patee House Museum

The Hotel Patee House was the center of the nation's westward expansion from the start of the Pony Express to the death of Jesse James. It was opened in 1858 as a luxurious hotel to serve travelers as the railroad pushed west to St. Joseph. It was designated

as a National Historical Landmark for the role it served as the headquarters for the Pony Express in 1860. When Jesse James was killed just a block away in 1882, the Patee House is where his mother, his widow and two sons took refuge and the location where the local sheriff interrogated them the next day. Now filled with historical artifacts documenting the area's development, the Patee House is considered a lynchpin of history. According to author Robert West

**National Military Heritage Museum**



**Patee House Museum Carousel**

# In The Mode The Transportation Quiz

By Matt Hiebert

Howard, "The forces of transportation and communication created in and around Patee House between 1859 and 1867 actually won the West." Replicas of blacksmith shops, carousels, sleighs and the original gallows from the Buchanan County jail are only a small part of the museum.

## The National Military Heritage Museum

If the study of the history of war is your interest, then the National Military Heritage Museum is one place you shouldn't miss. Located in what was St. Joseph's first police station at 701 Messanie St., the building itself has a unique architectural history dating back to 1890. The museum's self-stated goal is to "preserve the heritage of the men and women who served in the United States Armed Forces and on the home-front."

## The Stetson Hat Company

Abraham Lincoln was President of the United States when John B. Stetson made his first western fur-felt hat. The use of only the best-quality materials coupled with his 43 step process insured that Stetson would be the hat of choice for true cowboys. Before his death in 1979, the actor John Wayne would fly to St. Joseph on a regular basis to order his hats specially-made. Today, the Stetson Factory Outlet Store is open to the public every day but Sunday, where they offer a wide assortment of western felt and straw hats, dress hats and caps. Nowhere in the state will you find a more fascinating concentration of historical sites and architecture than northwest Missouri.

*Elaine Justus is public information and outreach manager for MoDOT's Northwest District.*

**Until next time, may your destinations be exciting and the journeys to them eye-opening. ■**



Missouri ranks 9<sup>th</sup> in the nation for length of railroad track miles. More than 500,000 passengers and 42 million tons of cargo move through the state every year.

- Approximately how many miles of railroad track does MoDOT inspect each year?
  - None
  - 200 miles
  - 6,000 miles
  - 12,000 miles
- How many railroad freight companies currently operate in Missouri?
  - 4
  - 19
  - 40
  - 198
- What are the names of the two Amtrak trains that run between St. Louis and Kansas City?
  - Ann Rutledge and St. Louis/Kansas City Mules
  - Gateway Express and Missouri Mule
  - Silverbullet and Coachmaster
  - Kansas City Scout and Gateway Guide
- What was the name of the first railroad to cross the state?
  - Frisco
  - Missouri Pacific
  - Hannibal & St. Joseph
  - Amtrak
- A fully loaded coal car weighs about:
  - 63,000 lbs.
  - 100,000 lbs.
  - 150,000 lbs.
  - 263,000 lbs.
- Missouri has about how many crossings intersecting with public roads?
  - 400
  - 700
  - 2,000
  - 3,900
- The first major train wreck in Missouri took place when the Gasconade River Bridge collapsed in:
  - 1842
  - 1855
  - 1902
  - 1914
- Missouri has the second and third largest rail hubs in the country.
  - True
  - False
- How many dollars of freight passes through Missouri on trains each year?
  - \$27 million
  - \$250 million
  - \$700 million
  - \$900 million

1. c 2. b 3. a 4. c 5. c 6. d 7. d 8. b 9. True  
(Kansas City is second, St. Louis is third). 10. c

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